

JEREMIAH DEXTER HOUSE
North Main St. & Rochambeau Ave.
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND.

HABS NO. RI-5

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
19-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Rhode Island

Historic American Buildings Survey
Philip D. Creer, District Officer
14 College Street, Providence, R.I.

JEREMIAH DEXTER HOUSE
North Main St. and Rochambeau Ave.
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND.

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
19-

Owner: Miss Phoebe Morris
Date of Erection: 1754
Architect: Unknown
Builder: Unknown
Present condition: Fair
Number of Stories: 1½
Materials of Construction: Frame structure, with clapboarded exterior walls, gambrel roof, central chimney of brick

Other existing records: Providence Evening Bulletin, August 9, 1934-article written by Editor.

Early Homes of Rhode Island-Downing, drawing-Six-panel door, P.166 also drawing corn crib and details of the wrought iron strap hinges and hasp P.214 (drawings by the Historic American Buildings Survey).

Letter received from owner, Miss Phoebe Morris, January 6, 1938, which reads in part as follows: "In 1754, Jeremiah Dexter built the house located on North Main Street, corner of Rochambeau Ave. Formerly North Main St. was the old Boston Post Road, and was abandoned when Pawtucket Turnpike was laid out, cutting off most of the front lawn of the house. About 1893, North Street was widened and the name changed to Rochambeau Ave. A strip of the Dexter Farm 17 feet wide, from North Main St. to Summit Ave. was given for the widening.

The Jeremiah Dexter historic well is at the sidewalk line where the French Soldiers filled their canteens. Back of the well stands the ancient rock with the trough in the top for washing hands; beside the rock is the mounting stone for horseback riders.

The French Allies were encamped on the Jeremiah Dexter Farm before going south, and on their return. After the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, in 1782, the troops returned to Jerry Dexter's Farm, awaiting ships to transport them to France.

Some of the worthless Continental money paid by the French to Jeremiah Dexter is still in the house now owned and occupied by Miss Phoebe E. Morris, great granddaughter of Jeremiah Dexter.

In the Rhode Island Colonial Records, Volume IX, Page 650, is the report of the committee appointed by the General Assembly at Newport, June 14, 1872. The survey of damages in North Providence by the French soldiers follows in part: To Jeremiah Dexter 699 cords of wood cut off 23 acres 1 rd 14 poles of land at \$2 per cord- \$1398
Damage to fences 481


In 1784, when clearing land, relics of the French encampment were found by Ezekiel Emerson, grandson of Jeremiah Dexter. The blade of an axe and a brass inkstand with initials on them are now in the Rhode Island Historical Society.

In 1865 a survey of the old French Camp was made by Rev. Edwin M. Stone, assisted by Henry Davis. They were able to trace out clearly defined sites of 313 huts, tents and fire pits as the result of their investigations. No trace now remains of the French Camp.

In 1881 and 1882, one hundred years after the French Encampment, 13 French Ovens were in the possession of Mrs. Anna Morris, granddaughter of Jeremiah Dexter. In 1881 and 1882 Henry T. Beckwith bought 32 acres of land through his agent, Amos Perry, which included the Camp Grounds, and announced his intention of giving a Park to the City of Providence, and it was to be called Rochambeau Park. At the solicitation of Amos Perry, Mrs. Morris was persuaded to donate three-quarters of an acre of land, which included the 13 French Ovens. This donation was to be merged with the gift of Henry T. Beckwith. No mention or credit was given to Mrs. Morris for her generous gift. Henry T. Beckwith made certain stipulations in giving the land for the park, and the city refused to accept his gift on account of the restrictions.

Mrs. Morris bought back her land, paying interest, but was not allowed to regain the three-quarters of an acre she had given. She was told the land, enclosed by Summit Avenue, Brewster Street, and Fourth Street would eventually be made a park, even if the larger park failed.

After the death of Henry T. Beckwith the triangular tract, which included the sites of hut tents and fire pits, was sold for house lots, and all traces of the French Camp were obliterated. There is, however, a small tablet commemorating the site of the French Camp". (Information furnished by Miss Phoebe Morris)


Philip D. Greer
District Officer for
Rhode Island.

DATA NOT COMPILED AND NOT GUARANTEED
BY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

TW 10/17/40